

Searching tips

Basic tips:

- Check your spelling!
- Use keywords, not sentences
- Believe it or not, Google can't find everything—use the databases available through iConn.org to get the type of information you need for your assignments.

Plan your search in advance:

- Know what your topic is, and know some of the different terms that are used when talking about your topic.
- You might want to “pre-search” to find good keywords.

Try using different keywords:

- If you're looking for information about a person, try using first and last name together, or just last name.
- If you get too many results, try adding keywords to your search
- If you get too few results, try removing keywords from your search.
- Try using different keywords that mean the same thing. Search engines match words; they don't understand what the words mean. For example, “town” and “village” have similar meanings, but will each return different results.

Use quotation marks:

- If you're looking for an exact phrase put quotation marks around the words. For example, searching for “acid rain” will give you results that include that exact phrase; searching for acid rain will give you results that include acid OR rain.

Truncate your search terms:

- Search engines only look for an exact match; truncation is a way of tricking the computer into looking for more than one word, or can be a way of “cheating” if you don't know the exact spelling. Replace the unknown letter(s) with an *.
For example, searching for librar* will return results for library, libraries, and librarian.

Use “Advanced Search”:

- Most databases and search engines have an Advanced Search option. They allow you to search multiple fields (for example, Title AND author) at the same time, or to take advantage of Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT), or limit your search in other ways (by language, for example). If your search returns too many results, or a lot of irrelevant results, use the options in Advanced Search to refine your search.